



City of Seattle

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Human Services Department

Catherine L. Lester, Interim Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 10, 2014

To: Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair
Housing Affordability, Human Services and Economic Resilience committee

Councilmember Tom Rasmussen
Councilmember Kshama Sawant
Councilmember Mike O'Brien (alternate)

From: Catherine Lester, Interim Director, HSD
Steve Johnson, Director, OED

Subject: Career Bridge Briefing

This briefing memorandum provides an update on the Career Bridge program, and specifically the transition to the Urban League as the lead community provider. This memorandum will also provide an update on progress to date, current challenges and process improvements, as well as upcoming priorities in 2014 and beyond. Finally, an accounting of the steps taken to address the challenges identified in the MEF Preliminary Evaluation Report presented to the Economic Resiliency and Regional Relations Committee meeting on September 17, 2013 will be provided. These include: 1) Transition to Community Organization; 2) Service Delivery Improvements – recruitment, case management services and supports, and job placement, retention and progression; and 3) Priorities for 2014 and 2015.

BACKGROUND:

Career Bridge is a comprehensive, community-centered strategy that addresses the disproportionate rates of poverty, un- and under-employment, violence, and criminal justice involvement among African-American and other men of color. Career Bridge brings together job readiness, workforce training, social services supports (e.g., housing, transportation, childcare resources), and grassroots community support networks to assist participants in attaining the supports and skills needed to; secure a job, achieve personal stability, and connect them to training needed for good paying jobs that provide a pathway to longer-term careers. The longer term program focus is on developing pathways to economic opportunity and strengthening families and the community.

Career Bridge launched its pilot in late 2012 and continued through the end of 2013. In its first year, the project focused on African American men who faced multiple barriers, including a record of former incarceration, limited work history, and low levels of education. Career Bridge's approved budget provided for \$60,000 of new funding and \$150,000 of reallocated workforce funding for the implementation of the pilot in

2013. Concurrently, City Council adopted a Statement of Legislative Intent and allocated funds to the City Auditors Office for an evaluation of Career Bridge's initial start-up and pilot implementation.

At the September 17, 2013 Economic Resiliency and Regional Relations Committee meeting, MEF Associates presented its Preliminary Evaluation findings on Career Bridge during its initial start-up and pilot; and proposed measures for a comprehensive evaluation of Career Bridge over 2013 and 2014. The report identified operational and infrastructure challenges related to program goals and intended outcomes, program implementation, and expansion.

Many of those challenges were related to the ad hoc administrative and programmatic structure and resources leveraged to implement the pilot. The initial design and development, program management and operational functions were provided by multiple partners. Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) was a start-up partner in the early development, and provided staffing for the training and job development services, as well as tracking client data. Because of limited flexible funding (\$60k), HSD and OED staff filled in operational gaps other functions including community sponsor coordination, case management and community outreach. The intake and assessment, case management, and retention support functions were unfunded and dependent on community sponsors and supporters who volunteered their time, and personal resources to the planning, ongoing development and implementation of the model.

In late 2013, the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle (ULMS) was selected through an open and competitive process to administer the continued implementation, development and potential expansion of the original model. The contract between HSD and the Urban League was executed on April 1, 2014. Beginning in 2014, Council approved \$400,000 in new Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to support the transition of Career Bridge from city staff and SJI to lead community organization.

Since 2013 the program has made significant progress toward building the community and institutional infrastructure to engage African-American men including many who were formerly incarcerated- with a range of services and supports, moving them towards self-sufficiency. The transition to an established community partner provided an opportunity to address many of the challenges identified in the MEF Evaluation and allowed for a more consistent set of services to Career Bridge participants. As described in more detail below, Career Bridge is evolving from a pilot initiative to a comprehensive community change strategy.

PROGRESS TO DATE:

During the current calendar year, considerable focus and resource has been dedicated to continuing to transition to "steady state" in the implementation of Career Bridge. This has included focusing on the following objectives: 1) Transitioning to a Community-Based Organization; 2) Service Delivery Improvements; and 3) Enhancing Overall Performance.

Transition to Community:

During the first quarter of 2014, HSD and OED worked with the Urban League to support a smooth transition of the program administration and ongoing implementation. Reporting structures were established for accountability; tracking systems were modified to ensure alignment with MEF evaluation requirements; and resources were put in place to serve participants (ongoing work with past cohorts, new participants). A Project Manager and a Navigator were hired by Urban League in April 2014. An Oversight Committee comprised of OED, HSD, and the Urban League was established to ensure ongoing coordination, accountability and support.

Service Delivery Improvements:

In preparation for its first cohort, the Urban League and community partners developed strategies to build on the strengths of the model and address the challenges raised by MEF's July 2013 Preliminary Evaluation Report and participant feedback.

The Urban League has cultivated new partners and leveraged new community resources including South Seattle College. It has begun to coordinate the linkage of community capacity to support participants in job retention, higher level job training and employment in a way that intentionally coordinates and sequences available services from community based organizations, human service providers, training providers and employers. These linkages include:

- Partnership with South Seattle College to strengthen access to supports, training connections, and use of classroom facilities. The College provides free classroom facilities and computer lab; on-site CASAS testing and an orientation to skills and vocational training as part of the two week workshop.
- Contract with TRAC Associates for ongoing job development, specialized assessment, training referrals, case management support, and participant data management.

The hiring of a dedicated Case Manager has alleviated the dependence on community sponsors for recruitment, assessments, and ongoing case management. The Case Manager provides consistency and access to needed services, and participant follow up with the community sponsors providing social support and mentoring. The Urban League also contracted with a certified mental health and family counselor to facilitate weekly men's support groups, and individual counseling.

The core training was expanded from 20 hours in one week to 50 hours over two weeks. The curricula was enhanced to provide more intensive support in life skills, leadership development, financial management, and resume writing; and added components to strengthen the connection to training. Additionally, a new Career Bridge Intern program was created to provide structured support, training, leadership development and paid work experience for participants. These interns provide administrative support, community outreach, and are part of the Peer Support group, reaching out to and reengaging past participants to support retention and stability.

Performance:

Nine cohorts have been completed to date, with 84 participants (7 completed during the pilot phase and 2 in April and June 2014). Of the 62 participants enrolled in the pilot phase, 78% were placed in jobs (48) and/or 11% entered a training program (7). Of those placed in jobs, 83% were employed at 3 months, 79% at 6 months, 73% at 9 months, and 69% at one year. Additionally, six men received job/wage upgrades (See retention rate note). The participants from the two new training cohorts are still in the early stages of their job search.

ROAD MAP FOR 2014 AND BEYOND:

In 2014 and 2015, Career Bridge will focus on four goals: 1) Focus on Results and Disparities; 2) Strengthen and Expand Community Partnership; 3) Leveraging Integration Opportunities, and 4) Systems Change.

Focus on Results and Disparities:

While self-sufficiency through career employment for individuals with multiple and significant barriers is the primary goal of Career Bridge, job training and employment alone are not sufficient to address the racial disparities. Career Bridge's approach is focused on strengthening families and community "social capital"; as well as integrated services, and systems change to strengthen and sustain our efforts to improve overarching community conditions.

Strengthen and Expand Community Partnership:

Career Bridge was developed through an ongoing partnership with "Community Sponsors and Supporters" a network of formal and informal groups with strong ties and existing relationships within the community. This innovative and community-driven model recognizes and builds on the strengths of community networks. Strong personal relationships, grassroots implementation and participant empowerment through shared leadership and accountability differentiate Career Bridge from other services for this population. As a result, the Urban League must provide high quality services as an individual organization, but also work closely with the City, grassroots community organizations, community activists, and partner organizations in delivering services to participants and sharing best practices, challenges, and successes.

Leveraging Integration Opportunities:

During the pilot phase, participants have been African-American men; a majority with criminal backgrounds, compounded by housing insecurity, transportation, financial needs, mental health and other needs. Many are also challenged with low levels of education, computer, basic and soft skills, undiagnosed disabilities, and limited work experience. Despite these difficulties, most participants secured jobs. Many of the participants continue to face significant barriers that have been difficult to meet within existing resource constraints. These barriers have impacted participants' ability to successfully maintain a job or enter training. While the short-term employment outcomes have been positive, longer-term data and experience highlight the need for more intensive longer term supports. Continued work on establishing partnerships with existing community resources and support is needed to address those longer term needs.

Systems Change:

Because of the complexity of personal and system/policy barriers facing this population, it is important to identify and address policy and systems barriers that prevent meaningful reform and progress. In addition to the individual-level goals, Career Bridge seeks to affect community-level change as well as to advocate for policy and system changes that support individual and community strengths, assets and potential. These challenges present opportunities to use Career Bridge to leverage cross-system investments and support. Examples of the policy/systems issues include:

- Racism in hiring regardless of education and background
- Criminal histories/felonies – prevent access to housing, jobs, financial aid
- Lack of real commitment from employers
- Lack of targeted job creation programs/policies
- Lack of public resources and policies to support reentry support